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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

RESOLUTION

New Delhi, the 1st July 1948

No. LR. 2(137).—In pursuance of paragraph 8 of Resolution No. LR. 2(103) dated the 12th May 1947, the Government of India in the Ministry of Labour appointed a Fact Finding Committee to report on the grant of monetary benefits and concessions to colliery workers in Assam on lines similar to those granted to colliery workers in Bengal and Bihar as a result of the recommendations of the Board of Conciliation (Colliery Dispute). The Committee has now submitted its report (*vide* annexe).

2. In regard to basic wages, the Government of India accept the recommendations of the Committee, as restated below with slight modifications, subject to the condition that the recommendations shall in no case have the effect of reducing the present basic wage rate of any worker:—

(i) *For Coal-cutters or Opening men*, an increase of $38\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. over the 1939 basic wage subject to a minimum new basic wage of Re. 1 per 24 cubic feet of coal in solid.

(ii) *For Bhaskawalas or Drillers*, an increase of $38\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. over the 1939 basic wage subject to a minimum new basic wage of Re. 1 per 25 tubs of 24 cubicfeet each of loose coal.

(iii) *For Coal-Pullers*, an increase of $33\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. over the 1939 basic wage subject to a minimum new basic wage of Re. 1 per $12\frac{1}{2}$ tons (or 25 tubs of 10 cwt. each) of coal pulled.

(iv) *For Loaders*, an increase of $35\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. over the 1939 basic wage subject to a minimum new basic wage of Re. 1 per 25 tubs of 10 cwt. each of Bhaska coal or 5 tubs of 10 cwt. each of other coal.

(v) *For Trammers or Trollymen*, an increase of $33\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. over the 1939 basic wage, the new minimum basic wage being Re. 1 per day.

In all the above cases, where the present basic wage is in excess of $38\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. over the 1939 basic wage and where the worker has not had any increase in basic wage after the 1st July 1946, an increase of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. over the present basic wage (rounded to the nearest anna) shall be given.

(vi) *For adult male time-rated workers, underground and surface* [other than the underground workers mentioned in items (i) to (v) above] who are now in receipt of basic wages between 8 annas and Re. 1 per day and are not otherwise benefited by the general increase in basic rates now proposed and have had no increase in basic wages since 1st July, 1946, an increase of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. over the 1939 basic wage.

A minimum basic wage of 8 annas per day for all male time-rated workers.

A minimum basic wage of 7 annas for all female time-rated workers. A female worker who has put in a minimum service of 12 months will be allowed an increase of 1 anna in the basic wage.

8. As regards dearness allowance, Government accept the recommendation of the Committee that coal cutters, bhaskawallas (drillers), coal pullers, loaders, trammers or trolleymen should be granted a dearness allowance equal to 112½ per cent. of the new basic wage and that dearness allowance at the following rates should be granted to other categories of workers:—

	Proposed scale	Minimum
	Per cent.	Rs. a. p.
For workers drawing a basic wage (upto Rs. 30 p. m.)	112½	13 0 0
For workers drawing a basic wage of Rs. 31 to 50 p. m.	75	33 12 0
For workers drawing a basic wage of Rs. 51 to Rs. 100 p. m.	50	37 8 0
For workers drawing a basic wage of Rs. 101 to Rs. 300 p. m.	30	50 0 0

4. The Committee has recommended that the present system of weekly payment of attendance bonus should be continued with a 50 per cent. increase over the present daily rate. Government, while accepting the increased rates of bonus, have carefully considered whether the present system should not be replaced by a system of quarterly bonus as in the case of the colliers in Central Provinces and Berar and have come to the conclusion that, pending further consideration, bonus at the present rates should continue to be paid weekly. However the additional 50 per cent. bonus recommended by the Committee will be paid quarterly. The Government of India consider that there are definite advantages in putting bonus payments on a quarterly basis, as is the case elsewhere in the country, and intend to consult mine owners and labour leaders with the object of trying to bring the Assam practice into line with that adopted at other coalfields.

5. The remaining recommendations of the Committee, namely those in regard to provident fund, concessional supply of food grains, lead and lift rates, supply of explosives, shovels, pickaxes, etc., standardisation of tubs and abolition of the system of contract labour, have been accepted by Government without any modifications.

6. The Government of India trust that the mine owners in Assam will take necessary action to give effect to the above recommendations with effect from the 1st July 1948. It is also the intention that all the other recommendations of the Board of Conciliation (Colliery Dispute), Bengal and Bihar, which have not been dealt with by the Fact Finding Committee, namely those relating to leave, promotions, medical facilities, etc., which are simple and are of a general nature, should be implemented in the coalfields of Assam, as is those of Central Provinces and Berar in so far as they are applicable and to the extent the present position falls short of them.

7. An announcement is being made separately by the Ministry of Industries and Supply as regards increase in the prices of coal.

ORDER

ORDERED that a copy of the Resolution be communicated to all Provincial Governments, all Chief Commissioners, the several Ministries of the Government of India, the Cabinet Secretariat, the Central Board of Revenue, the Auditor General of India, the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central), the Economic Adviser to the Government of India, the Director General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, Calcutta and all recognised Chambers of Commerce and Associations.

ORDERED also that the Resolution be published in the *Gazette of India*.

ANNEXE

REPORT OF THE FACT FINDING COMMITTEE ON THE GRANT OF MONETARY BENEFITS AND OTHER CONCESSIONS TO COLLIERY WORKERS IN THE PROVINCE OF ASSAM.

In accordance with paragraph 8 of resolution No. LR.2(108), dated the 12th May 1947, the Government of India in the Ministry of Labour in their letter No. LR-2(197), dated the 26th August 1947 appointed a Fact Finding Committee to report on the extent to which monetary benefits and concessions can be granted to the Colliery workers in the Province of Assam, on lines similar to those granted to the Colliery workers in Bengal and Bihar as a result of the recommendations of the Board of Conciliation (Colliery Disputes).

* 2. The following members constituted the Committee:—

(i) Mr. D. G. Jadhav, B.A., LL.B., Regional Labour Commissioner (Central), Southern Zone, Bombay.

and

(ii) Mr. A. B. Guha, B.Sc. (Min. Bir'hm), A.M.I. Min. E. (Lond.), Controller of Collieries, Ballarpur, Nagpur.

3. The main functions of the Committee were the same as those prescribed for the Fact Finding Committee appointed for the coalfields in Central Provinces and Berar. The Committee was to report on—

(a) the present rates of basic wages, lead and lift rates, dearness allowance and other concessions to workers corresponding to the main categories referred to in paragraph 17 (2) of the Report of the Board of Conciliation and to such other categories of workers in respect of whom the Committee may consider it necessary to make recommendations.

(b) what increase in basic wages, lead and lift rates, dearness allowance and other concessions should be allowed to the main categories referred to in (a) above so as to give the Colliery workers in Assam, concessions equivalent to those given to similar categories of workers in the Bengal and Bihar coalfields.

4. In order to have complete data of the working conditions and the wage existing in the different collieries in Assam, the Committee issued a general circular to all the Colliery owners in Assam requesting them to furnish information about the different categories of workers employed, rates of wages of each category in 1939 and 1947; system of payment; rate of dearness allowance; details of foodstuffs and cloth supplied together with any other amenities provided; capacity and rate of payment per tub, average number of hours worked per day and average number of days worked per week by an employee, etc. The following Colliery owners were addressed:—

(1) Cherra Chhatak Ropeway Co. Ltd. c/o Gillanders Arbuthnot & Co. 8, Clive Street, Calcutta.

(2) The Assam Mining and Trading Co. Ltd. Labon, Shillong.

- (3) The Assam Railways and Trading Co. Ltd. Margherita P.O. Assam.
- (4) The Nazira Coal Co. Ltd. c/o Shaw Wallace & Co., Managing Agents, 4, Bankshall Street, Calcutta.
- (5) The Bemolpur Colliery, "Concrete House", Rehbari P.O., Assam.
- (6) The Dilli Colliery & Co., Tinsukhia P.O., Assam.

5. The Committee also appointed one investigator to collect figures for the compilation of cost of living index numbers and check wage statistics from a few selected collieries in Assam.

6. The Committee requested the Indian Mining Federation, Calcutta and the Indian Colliery Owners' Association, Jharia, Bihar with a request to supply information on the above lines in regard to those collieries as were members of their respective organisations.

7. The two organisations of Colliery labour in Assam namely the Assam Colliery Labour Union, Ledo, District Lakhimpur and the Assam Railways and Trading Company Mazdoor Union, Margherita were also requested to submit statements of the wage structures of some of the important collieries together with their suggestions and such other information as they thought would be helpful to the committee.

8. In order to ascertain the cost of living, standard of living, supply and distribution position of foodstuffs and the rates of wages of workers in the Urban and Rural Industries in the Province, the Committee requested the Assam Government to advise their Labour, Food and Supply Departments, to assist and supply the Committee with necessary information so that they may either avail of the same or interview responsible officers from those Departments on their arrival at Shillong.

9. For this purpose, the Committee interviewed the following officers at places stated below:—

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| (1) Sir H. G. Dennehy, CSI, CIE, ICS, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam | Shillong. |
| (2) K. C. Barua, Esq., B.A., Commissioner of Labour, Assam | " |
| (3) H. F. Clark, Esq., Chief Adviser to the Indian Tea Association | " |
| (4) K. Bhattacharya, Esq., Assistant Director of Supplies, Government of Assam | " |
| (5) A. C. Roy, Esq., Senior Inspector i/c Office of the Regional Coal Controller of Assam | Margherita |
| (6) J. R. Wilson, Esq., Secretary, Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association | " |
| (7) Mr. Kannikar, Representative of the Political Officer to the Govt. of Assam | " |
| (8) Mr. Taikuddin Ahmed, Requisition Officer, Dibrugarh | " |
| (9) W. A. Connel, Esq., Superintendent, the Makum Tea Co. Ltd. and Namdang Tea Co. Ltd | " |
| (10) N. K. Rustomji, Esq., I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur | Dibrugarh. |
| (11) Mr. M. Sultan, S. D. O., Sibsagar | Sibsagar. |

10. The Committee visited the following collieries and went underground some of them to study the existing working conditions of the miners and mining operations in Assam Coalfields.

- (1) The Thengjinath Coalfield, Jantia Hills, Pynersula.
- (2) The Charrapunji Colliery, Khasi Hills, Cherapunji.

(8) The Bargolai Colliery, Bargolai, Margherita.

(4) The Ledo Colliery, Ledo.

(5) The Namdong Colliery, Margherita.

11. On the 19th and 20th August 1947, the Colliery owners and the Labour Organisations were requested to send their statements on or before the 9th September 1947. They were further informed that the Committee will have consultations with their representatives from the 15th September 1947. Thus giving the parties adequate time to prepare their respective cases in advance.

12. All the colliery owners and the labour organisations supplied the Committee with their statements but the Indian Mining Federation and the Indian Colliery Owners Association expressed their inability to do so as none of the colliery managements in Assam were affiliated to their Central Organisations.

13. There being no organisation of the colliery owners in Assam, each management represented its case separately in the beginning. However, at the request of the Committee, the Owners represented their case jointly on the day of final discussions. The two labour organisations too represented the case of their labour separately in the beginning, but jointly on the final day of hearing. The following owners represented the colliery managements:—

(1) S. C. Chowdhary, Esq., Director, The Assam Mining & Trading Co.

(2) J. N. Saymonds, Esq., Manager and Ropeway Engineer of the Cherrapunji Colliery.

(3) P. L. Dahan, Esq., Mining Engineer of the Cherrapunji Colliery.

(4) R. Petergrave Johnson, Esq., General Manager, Assam Railways and Trading Co. Ltd.

(5) T. K. Dobson, Esq., Colliery Superintendent, Assam Railways and Trading Co. Ltd.

(6) G. R. Delarue Browne, Esq., Assistant to the General Manager, The Assam Railways and Trading Co. Ltd.

(7) Dr. F. Atkinson, Chief Mining Engineer, Messrs. Shaw Wallace and Co.

(8) Mr. J. H. Burns, Manager, The Nazira Coal Co. Ltd.

(9) Mr. Alexander, Representing Indian Mining Association.

(10) Mr. D. N. Sen, Manager, Dilli Colliery Co.

14. The two labour unions were represented by the following office bearers:—

(1) Mr. Jankinath Dutta, President,

(2) Mr. Abdul Rab, Vice-President,

(3) Mr. B. P. Hajarikar, General Secretary, and

(4) Mr. Harindranath Kolita, Jt. Secretary,

representing the Assam Railways and Trading Co. Mazdoor Union, Ledo, and

(1) Mr. Pulin Bhattacharjee, General Secretary,

(2) Mr. Shivdas Gangulee, and

(3) Mr. Sitakanta Bhattacharjee, Members of the Managing Committee, representing the Assam Colliery Labour Union, Ledo.

15. The Committee also inspected some of the welfare measures provided by the Assam Railways and Trading Co. at Margherita and had personal talks with the selected colliery workers at various pit heads in the colliery premises and at miners' quarters provided by the management. In order to study the existing rates of wages and working conditions of the workers employed in other industries located in the surrounding areas, the Committee visited the

Digboi Oil Fields and the Numdong Tea Estates and had talks with the representatives of the management and workers employed there. The material so collected and the knowledge thus obtained by personal contacts was of great use in basing our conclusions.

16. Among the six colliery companies in the Province of Assam, the Assam Railways and Trading Co., is the biggest, having an output of nearly 90 per cent. of total coal excavated from the Assam Collieries every year. It, therefore, employs the largest number of workers in this field. The mining conditions obtaining in the collieries of this Company are, however, different from those obtaining in the Bengal and Bihar or the Central Provinces Coalfields. Here the underground workers are divided among 5 categories instead of 8 as in the collieries in Bengal, Bihar and in the Central Provinces and Berar.

These categories are:—

- (1) Coal Cutters,
- (2) Bhaskawallas or opening men or drillers,
- (3) Coal Pullers,
- (4) Loaders or tub fillers, and
- (5) Trammers.

17. The functions of a coal cutter in Assam is about the same as in C.P., Bengal and Bihar. A coal cutter, cutting coal by hand in Assam has to undergo a certain amount of strenuous job as he has got to work in a seam of small thickness. The height of the gallery varies from 8 ft. in the Khasia Jaintia Hills to about 6 ft. in Baragoli Colliery. The work of coal cutting in these mines is solely manual while in some of the collieries in Bengal and Bihar and also in C.P. and Berar Coalfields, it is partly manual and partly mechanical. Explosives are not often used in Assam Coal Mines to drive coal galleries. On an average, a coal cutter cuts up to $4 \times 6 \times 1 = 24$ c.ft. of solid coal per shift, and earns about Rs. 1/5/- per foot of solid coal cut.

18. (i) Baragoli Colliery belonging to Assam Railways and Trading Co., situated in Makum Coalfields of Assam was inspected personally by members of the Committee. A stone drift about a mile long has been driven into the side of the hill to tap the coal seam about 50' to 60' thick which is rather highly inclined. The outcrop of this coal seam may be seen at different point at the summits of the hills.

(ii) The Mine is split up into rooms and stalls at 90' apart. Two main and tail haulages working on the level on each side of the main cross cut serve as a feeder to the main haulage of the stone drift which is also Main and Tail. The development of the mine is carried on by driving main galleries of 5' x 3' by means of pick miners who, we are informed, can drive in on average of about 1'-6" per day. The main galleries later on are dressed to the requisite sizes to serve as haulage ways.

(iii) The major part of the output comes from depillaring area. After the pillars are formed, each pillar is reduced by drilling holes by hand and blasted by permitted explosives. The man who drills the holes and wins the coal is termed locally as Bhaskawalla or Driller. He is the counterpart of a trained miner in a depillaring area in Jharia. Raneegeunge, but has definitely a softer job.

(iv) After the Bhaskawalla or the opening man has blased the coal the roof and sides are dressed by him by means of a crowbar. A miner Sardar supervises during this period about the safety of the roof and sides and an overman is occasionally present to supervise the procedure.

(v) After the area is made safe, the coal puller pulls the coal and drops it down the chute at a gradient of roughly 33° to 35° degrees. The coal-puller is an unskilled worker but has to put in a hard physical work at short intervals.

(vi) The coal going down the chute is loaded at the bottom of the chute or channel by loaders into tubs of roughly 10 cwts. A single loader loads from 40 to 60 tubs in a shift of 8 hours. This is possible due to the fact that the tub is practically underneath the chute and the loader has only to use his shovel and there is no lead or lift. Occasionally these loaders have to tram the tubs to the break or haulage way. The loader, Bhaskawalla, coal puller are all paid by a contractor on daily rated basis.

19. Wages.—*Coal cutters or opening men, Bhaskawallas or Drillers.*

As stated before, the Assam Railways and Trading Co. is the largest colliery owner in Assam. The coal cutter's job in the mines belonging to this Company, is solely for driving main galleries, dressing and making safe roof and sides, and hence their number is comparatively smaller than that employed in other mines. In the Cherrapunji Colliery, the miners or coal cutters cut the coal by pick and carry the same to the nearest rail point. They usually work in pairs and they are therefore miner-cum-carriers. The basis of payment in this Mine is a tub rate of 22½ c.ft. capacity. In Dilli colliery, the cutters work in pairs but loading is not done by them. They are paid on footage and get Rs. 2/8/- per liner foot of coal cut.

20. It will be seen that there is no uniformity in the working conditions or the basis of payment. However, on account of the low width of the seam in certain mines, the work of the coal cutter is rather exacting. In some mines they are required to crawl a distance of about 500 feet to reach the coal faces on the hill-sides. No coal cutting machine is in operation in Assam. Naturally the miners are required to put in strenuous labour.

21. Lack of uniformity in the basis of payment was one of the greatest hurdles in the path of the Committee. From the data available to the Committee and from the discussions with the representatives of the Colliery owners and the workers, the Committee came to the conclusion that on account of the very strenuous conditions of working in Assam Mines, the coal-cutters, can on average cut $4 \times 8 \times 1 = 24$ c.ft. of coal in solid per shift of 8 hours. This has been admitted by the Indian Mines Inspector and also by the employers and the employees. On our personal inspection of the working conditions of the miners in these coalfields and on interrogation of the coal-cutters working on the spot, we have come to the conclusion that this figure may be taken as an average for the fixation of the basic wage rate. The wage of a coal cutter in 1939 was Re. -/12/- per day which was higher than the then prevailing rate in the Bengal and Bihar coalfields. The main reason for higher rate was to attract labour from far off places in the absence of local labour and also to dissuade them from joining other local industries such as the Digboi Oil Fields, Tea Gardens, etc. The majority of mining labour in the Province of Assam consists of Pathans, Nepalees, Raipuris and Sambalpuris. Circumstances do not warrant any lowering down of this rate and the Committee has, therefore, accepted this figure of Re. -/12/- per day for the coal cutter or coal getter or bhaskawalla, the opening man winning coal by hand, as his basic wage in 1939, which year has been taken by the Board of Conciliation for purposes of comparison. As explained above, the nature of work of this category of workers is strenuous and it therefore deserves special treatment. The Committee, therefore, recommends that in order to bring the rate of wages of these categories of workers on the same level as before in comparison with that of Bengal and Bihar Colliery workers, an increase of 33.1/3 per cent. on the basic wage of Re. -/12/- in 1939 may be granted to the coal cutters, and thus their minimum

basic wage should be raised to Re. 1/- per day. This increase will naturally allow the Assam Colliery workers to enjoy higher rates of wages as before, although his daily output for certain categories of labour will be less than that of the similar worker in the Bengal and Bihar collieries and in Central Provinces.

22. Coal pullers.—This category of workers exists only in the Assam Collieries. He is an unskilled worker but his work being of strenuous nature, he was drawing a minimum basic wage of Re. -/12/- per day in 1939, for pulling 25 to 30 tubs of coal per shift. Considering the trying circumstances under which he has to work, the Committee feels that his case also merits preferential treatment and it therefore recommends that the coal puller should also be given an increase of 33.1/3 per cent. over the basic wage and thus his minimum basic wage should be brought to Re. 1/- per day per head for a minimum of 12½ tons of coal pulled in 8 hours shift or 25 tubs of 10 cwt. capacity each.

23. Loaders.—In the Cherrapunji Colliery of M/s. Cherra Chhatak Ropeway Company, the loaders and trammers or trolley-men are working in conjunction. They can load and tram between 4 to 6 tubs for which they receive a payment of Re. -/14/- per tub of 22.5 c.ft. which holds roughly 11 cwt. of coal and therefore each of them earns a minimum of Rs. 1/12/- per day. In the collieries belonging to the Assam Railways and Trading Co. and the Nazira Coal Co. the loaders load the tubs and tram them up to 1st break haulage way. They are the employees of the contractors. From the statements submitted to us and from the evidence given before us, we have come to the conclusion that the minimum basic earnings of a loader during the year 1939 were Re. -/12/- per day for loading a minimum of 25 tubs of 10 cwt. capacity of coal in Assam Railways and Trading Company. We, therefore, recommend that they should be given an increase of 33 ¼ per cent. over the 1939 basic wage and thus their minimum basic wage should be made Re. 1/- per day for loading 25 tubs of 10 cwt. capacity of each tub per shift, where Bhaska coal is available and 5 tubs in Collieries situated in Khasia and Jaintia Hills.

24. Trammers or Trolley-men.—The work of the trammers or trolley-men in the Assam Coalfields is comparatively of easier nature as they are not required to cover a long distance as in the Bengal and Bihar coalfields and as the capacity of the tub is only 10 cwt. the size being 24 c.ft. whereas in Bengal and Bihar it is generally 36 c.ft. Trammers are time rated workers and their basic wage in 1939 was Re. -/12/- per day. It is usually the practice in the coalfields of the Assam Railways and Trading Co. to engage new entrants as trammers and to give them an increase of Re. -/1/- per year upto Re. -/14/- since this job is being considered as an easy one. Although the nature of work of this worker is not so arduous and therefore may seem not to deserve preferential treatment, still the Committee is of the opinion that if this class of workers is denied an increase in the basic wage, which has been recommended for the other categories of underground workers, it is bound to create unpleasantness among these workers which may result in disturbing the industrial peace. Moreover, he is an underground worker and according to the recommendation of the Board of Conciliation the underground workers deserve preferential treatment. We, therefore, recommend that the trammers or trolley-men may also be given an increase of 33½ per cent. over their basic wage of 1939 and thus their rate should be raised to Re. 1/- per day for tramping.

25. The increase in the basic wages of the underground workers as recommended above would maintain the difference in wages in favour of Assam workers. Under these recommendations, the daily wages of the different categories of underground workers will be as follows:

(a) *Coal cutters or Coal-getters, Opening men or Bhaskawallas or Drillers.*

<i>Bengal and Bihar</i>			<i>Assam</i>		
Loading 1 tub of 36·00 c. ft. capacity			Basic rate for 2 c. ft. of solid coal cut in 1939*		
	Rs.	As. Ps.		Rs.	As. Ps.
Basic wage	0	8	0	Basic wage	0 12 0
50 % increase	0	4	0	33-1/3% increase	0 4 0
New basic wage	0	12	0	New basic wage	1 0 0
Difference Rs. 0 4 0			per day.		

*(To earn this new basic wage we recommended that the Bhaskawallas should win at least 25 tubs of loose coal per shift.)

(b) *Similarly the earnings of a loader and coal puller would be:*

<i>Bengal and Bihar</i>			<i>Assam</i>		
Loading 1 tub of 36·00 c. ft. capacity			For loading or pulling per day per shift*		
	Rs.	As. Ps.		Rs.	As. Ps.
Basic wage	0	8	0	Basic rate of 1939	0 12 0
50 % increase	0	4	0	33-1/3% increase	0 4 0
New basic wage	0	12	0	New basic wage	1 0 0

*Our proposal is based on loading at least 25 tubs of 24 c. ft. capacity each, of bhaska coal per day per shift. In the case of coal won by miners other than bhaskawallas, our proposal is based on loading at least 5 tubs of 24 c. ft. capacity shift.

It may be stated here that there is no separate category of loaders in the Bengal and Bihar coalfields. There the coal cutters themselves do the loading job for which they are paid Rs. -/12/- per day as the new basic wage, which means that the loaders in the Assam collieries will be getting Rs. -/4/- more per day.

(c) *The basic wages of a trolleyman or trammer as compared with that of a trolleyman in the Bengal and Bihar Collieries will be as follows:*

<i>Bengal and Bihar</i>			<i>Assam</i>		
	Rs.	As. Ps.		Rs.	As. Ps.
Basic wage in 1939	0	8	0	Present basic as in 1939	0 12 0
50% increase	0	4	0	33-1/3% increase	0 4 0
New basic wage	0	12	0	New basic wage	1 0 0

26. Adult Male Time-rated Workers—Underground.—As regards other underground workers who are not covered by our proposals and who are either employed by the contractor or the company on time-rated basis, the Committee holds that in order to keep all the underground workers contented and happy, they should be given an increase of 12½ per cent. over their 1939 basic wage. The Committee hopes that this inducement will go a long way in helping the collieries to have a settled labour force in place of the present migratory one.

27. Adult Male Time-rated Workers—surface.—Considering the difficult position of labour supply in the province of Assam in general and in coalfields in particular, the abnormal rise in the prices of articles of daily necessities of life and the gradual improvement in the standard of living of all the workers in general, the Committee has come to the conclusion that the surface workers should also be given some increase over their basic wage. It is, therefore, recommended that all the surface workers should receive an increase of 12½ per cent. over their basic wage of 1939 if they were getting Rs. 30/- or less per month.

28. Basic Wage.—It is the common experience in all industries that major disputes arise out of wage questions. The principle of "Living Wage" therefore, must receive our attention for all types of workers in the industry. An average worker should be able to satisfy his normal needs if he has to maintain

his existence in a civilised community. We, therefore, suggest that the recommendations of the Board of Conciliation, in this behalf may be accepted and all male workers surface may be given a minimum wage of Rs. 9-8-0 per day, and where not existing, it should be brought up to this standard.

29. **Female Labour.**—The minimum basic wage of the female labour in 1939 was As. -/7/- per day, and this may remain as the basic wage of female worker in Assam. In order, however, that this may compare favourably with the proposed rates of other categories of workers, we suggest that the basic wage of a female worker should be As. -/7/- and a female worker who has put in a minimum of 12 months' service, should be given an increase of 12½ per cent over her basic wage of 1939. The Committee's recommendations regarding dearness allowance and foodgrain concessions are applicable to these workers also.

30. **Dearness Allowance.**—While considering the question of dearness allowance the Committee had to bear in mind the fact that the proposed rates of wages for the Assam Colliery workers are higher than those received by the Bengal and Bihar Colliery workers. The Government of Assam are not maintaining separate cost of living index figures either for the whole province or for the colliery area. The Assam Railways and Trading Company supplied us with the cost of living index figure which was compiled by the Company, in the absence of official figures in this respect. This index figures showed that the cost of living in the Colliery area in Assam had risen by 200 points approximately over the 100 base of 1939. The Committee deputed its investigator to collect the relevant data required for the compilation of the cost of living index figure. Our investigator personally visited the shops in the Margherita Market and supplied us with the present market as well as the Colliery Grainshop rates of foodstuffs from which it was ascertained that the 1939 and 1947 figures supplied by the colliery Company were approximately correct. Comparing the present cost of living index figure in the Assam Colliery area with that of Jharia, the Committee has arrived at the conclusion that it would not be justifiable to give dearness allowance at the rate of 150 per cent. as given in the Bengal and Bihar Collieries. To compensate for the rise of nearly 200 per cent. in the cost of living in the colliery area in Assam, the Committee recommends that 112½ per cent. dearness allowance on the new basic wage should be given to the underground colliery workers in Assam. This increase in the dearness allowance will entitle the coal cutters, Bhaskawallas, drillers, coal pullers, loaders, trammers or trolley-men to receive Rs. 1-2-0 as dearness allowance. The following comparative table shows the average emoluments of a coal cutter in the Bengal and Bihar Collieries and the Assam Collieries:—

<i>Bengal and Bihar</i>			<i>Assam</i>		
Loading a tub of 36-00 c. ft. capacity			At the rate of cutting one tub of cost of 24 c. ft. capacity on either loading, drilling, pulling and tramming 25 tubs of the same capacity per day per shift.		
Rs. AS. PS.			Rs. AS. PY		
Basic wage	0	8 0	Basic wage of 1939	0	12 0
50 % increase	0	4 0	33-1/3% increase	0	4 0
New basic wage	0	12 0	New basic wage	1	0 0
150% dearness allowance	1	2 0	112½% dearness allowance	1	2 0
	1	14 0		2	2 0
Foodgrain concessions	0	6 0	Foodgrain concessions (vide para. 32)	0	6 0
	2	4 0		2	8 0

It will thus be seen that the proposed increase will maintain the difference in the earnings of the underground workers in the Bengal and Bihar with those in the Assam coalfields.

31. As regards dearness allowance to other categories of workers, the Committee recommends that it should be granted at the following rates:—

Pay	Rate of dearness allowance	Minimum Rs. a. p.
(1) Up to Rs. 30	112½%	13 0 0
(2) Between Rs. 31 and Rs. 50	75%	33 12 0
(3) Between Rs. 51 and Rs. 100	50%	37 8 0
(4) Between Rs. 101 and Rs. 300	30%	50 0 0

32. **Foodstuffs.**—The Assam Railways and Trading Company and the Nazira Coal Company are the only two concerns which allow concessions in the prices of foodstuffs, etc., the former to the extent of As. -/8/6 while the latter to the extent of As. -/5/9 per head per day. The representatives of these two companies though favoured the grant of concessions in cash instead of issuing foodgrains at subsidised rates however agreed with us that the discontinuance of cheap grainshops would badly affect the workers as on account of the acute scarcity of foodgrains it would be very difficult for the workers to secure the articles of daily necessities of life elsewhere in the market. We, therefore, recommend that such concessions as are being granted by the Colliery owners at present to the workers and which cost the former not less than As. -/6/- per worker per day should continue as heretofore. Concessions amounting to less than an average of As. -/6/- per worker per day should be brought up to As. -/6/- per day hereafter.

33. In the case of the collieries where no arrangements for the issue of grains have been made, we suggest that they should take immediate steps to open cheap grain shops and allow the workers concessions to the value of As. -/6/- per day. However, till the time the grain shops come into operation, such colliery owners should grant a grain concession allowance of As. -/6/- to each employee per day for the day worked.

34. **Lead and Lift Rates.**—The existing conditions in bigger collieries of Assam Coalfields, do not necessitate the loaders to go beyond the requisite limit which entitles them to earn the lead and lift rates. However, in order to safeguard the interests of the loaders in all the mines in Assam the Committee recommends that the proposals of the Board of Conciliation in regard to lead and lift rates may be enforced in the Assam Collieries whenever circumstances warrant.

35. **Standardisation of tubs.**—The standard size of the tubs in use at the collieries belonging to the Assam Railways and Trading Company is 4 feet by three feet by two feet and they hold a standard half ton of coal. Taking into consideration the height of the seam in the Assam Collieries the Committee has formed the opinion that tubs of the above size will be quite suitable in this area. We, therefore, recommended that the colliery owners should be asked to substitute the present tubs of different sizes by tubs of the above dimensions as and when replacements are found necessary.

36. **Explosives, Shovels, Pickaxes, Crowbars, Baskets (Thapas), Kerosene Oil, etc.**—It was brought to the notice of the Committee that in some of the mines the cost of the above articles is deducted from the wage of the coal cutters and loaders. No argument is necessary to prove that the cost of the articles which are necessary for production should not be borne by the workers. It should be the liability of the employers alone to provide the employees with the necessary equipment required for the work.

We, therefore, recommend that no deductions should be made on this score. However, as regards the issue of explosives, we consider that though they should be issued free of cost still the maximum quantity to be issued should be fixed in consultation with the Inspector of Mines.

37. Provident Fund.—We recommend that one anna per rupee be deducted from the wages of a worker to which an equivalent amount be added by the employer in accordance with the Board of Conciliation's recommendations on the subject.

38. Bonuses.—At present the Assam Railways and Trading Company and the Nazira Coal Company grant an attendance bonus of As. -/4/- per day for 3 or more days' attendance and As. -/2/- per day for 4 days' attendance per week to the underground worker and As. -/4/- per day for 6 days' attendance and As. -/2/- per day for 5 days' attendance per week to the surface worker. In these collieries the average weekly attendance is more than 5 days in a week whereas that in Bengal and Bihar and C. P. Berar it is 4·7 days per week. This is due to the fact that the majority of the colliery labour here being of immigrant type, they have to remain on the colliery premises and to work. The bonus is paid weekly along with the wages. The representatives of the owners contended that this system of paying the amount of bonus weekly on attendance was working very satisfactorily and it should therefore be continued. In their opinion the payment of bonus every week was an inducement which made the workers feel that they are being amply rewarded for regular attendance. Taking into consideration the migratory nature of labour employed here, we feel that the present system of paying the bonus on attendance alone may continue. In order that the bonus earned may amount to 1 month's pay per year, we recommend that the rates should be raised by 40 per cent. and thus the existing rates of As. -/4/- and As. -/2/- may be raised to As. -/8/- and As. -/3/- respectively. This bonus should, however, be restricted to employees drawing up to Rs. 300 per month and a scale equivalent to four months' pay be drawn up for the monthly-rated staff.

39. The owners have, however, all along emphasized the fact that the collieries will not be able to bear the burden of the extra expenditure involved unless a corresponding increase in selling price of coal was sanctioned by the Government.

40. Contract Labour.—Before concluding this report, the Committee would like to bring to the notice of the Government of India the criticism and dissatisfaction that has been levelled against the contractors of Assam Coalfields by the workers and their representatives. We had not sufficient time at our disposal to go into the matter fully but from the evidence placed before us and on our personal experience we feel that majority of the men working under a contractor were not conversant with the wages that they were earning. Proper and adequate payments for work done during the week were in some instances, not paid. Money either deducted or kept back with a view to paying the men on the occasion of their going back to their villages, were not paid to them at all. In some cases, specially when the worker did not belong to the community of the contractor, the labourer was not paid his dues and very often than not, he had to leave the job under pressure if he complained. We were told that recently the payment of their wages is being made in the office of the contractor in the presence of the representative of the colliery management. But we are of the opinion that in spite of this, the miner is in the dark as to how much he has earned during the week, nor was the company's representative in a position to know and check about the correct earnings of the contract labourer. No trade union representative can enter into the colony of the contractor's labour nor can that labour be the members of the Union. We were told by the employers that contractors were responsible for the increased production

of coal. It is true that contractors with strict supervision and control do exact more from the labour and thus help increasing the production. But we are of the opinion that taking the changing times and improved civilised trend of the society into consideration security of labour should rest more on management than on the middleman and the management should have full control over the recruitment, hours of a work and payment of their workers. We, therefore, recommend the liquidation of this system at an early date. Till that time, however, the owners should be asked to see that the monetary benefits and other concessions which are given to the Company's labour are also extended to the labour employed by the contractor by introducing the system of paying the man direct by the Company, and should issue pay slips.

41. **General.**—We are grateful to the Government of Assam for the assistance and co-operation extended by them to the Committee and particularly to Mr. K. C. Barua, Commissioner of Labour, Assam, who in spite of the heavy duties of his office, managed to accompany us throughout the tour and there acted as interpreter to the Committee. He also helped the Committee in chalking out its day to day itinerary.

Our thanks are also due both to colliery management and the organised labour who represented their respective cases very ably before the Committee. The accommodating spirit showed by the management in adjusting and accepting the suggestions made to them by the Committee from time to time was really very good.

We would also like to record our appreciation of services rendered to us by our staff and the Secretary, Mr. K. B. Chitnis, who in spite of all the inconveniences caused to them owing to the travel difficulties, were able to give us fullest service that was possible for them. We also thank Mr. A. C. Roy, Senior Inspector in charge, Regional Coal Controller, Margarita, for the assistance he rendered to the Committee.

D. G. JADHAV,

A. B. GUHA.

*Members of the Fact Finding Committee
for Assam Coalfields.*

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR

REGIONAL LABOUR COMMISSIONER (CENTRAL), SOUTHERN ZONE

No. PPC/6/ Bombay, the August, 1947

To

- (1) Nazira Coal Co. Ltd., Calcutta.
- (2) D. D. Lohia, Tinsukia, Assam.
- (3) D. C. Barooah, Assam.
- (4) The Assam Rly. & Trading Co., Ltd., Assam.
- (5) The Assam Mining and Trading Co., Ltd., Shillong.
- (6) Cherra Chatak Ropeway Co. Ltd., Calcutta.

SIR

The Government of India in the Department of Labour have appointed a Fact Finding Committee for Collieries in Assam to hear and collect the views of the colliery owners and workers on matters relating to the existing rates of basic wage, lift and lead rates, dearness allowance, supply of foodgrains and cloth, and the grant of other concessions if any and recommend similar concessions to colliery workers in Assam. The Committee which consists of myself and Mr. A. B. Guha, Controller of Collieries, Ballarpur, would like to ascertain

from all concerned what monetary benefits should be granted so as to give the colliery workers in Assam concessions equivalent to those given to similar categories of workers in the Bengal and Bihar coalfields by the finding of the Board of Conciliation appointed for that area in the year 1947.

2. You are therefore requested to submit to the Committee so as to reach it not later than the 5th September 1947, a brief memorandum covering the following points:—

1. System of payment—time or piece rates.
2. Rates of overtime payment.
3. Foodstuffs & Cloth; extent of concessions; number.
4. Capacity of tubs.
5. Rates of payment per tub.
6. Production figures per month before the supply of foodgrains etc., was rationed.
7. Production figures per month for a period of six months immediately after the supply of foodgrains, etc., was rationed and distributed by the colliery at concessional rates.
8. Cost price of the commodities in the open market.
9. Family budget of five members.
10. Details required in form "A" attached.
11. Details as above for underground workers.
12. Comparative statement of wages and other allowance as per form "B" attached.

The Committee intends to tour the coal fields in Assam in the second week of September 1947 when it would like to take the evidence of your representatives on any of the above points. The exact dates of taking the evidence will be communicated to you later.

The required information may kindly be sent in duplicate one copy addressed to the Committee care of the Commission of Labour Assam, so as to reach it on the 5th of September 1947, and the other addressed to the Regional Labour Commissioner (Central), Southern Zone, Haroon House, 3rd Floor, Bazar Gate Street, Fort, Bombay.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant.

D. G. JADHAV.

" A "

Total labour engaged under each head	Average attendance per person per week	Percentage of attention	Total basis paid	Output for the month	Remarks

N. B.—The above informations are required in details for one particular month.

" B "

Comparative statement of wages and other Allowances

All categories of labour	1939					1947					Bonus	Remarks
	Basic rate	Gross wage-earned per shift	Deductions	Dearness allowance or special allowance, if any	Net earnings	Basic rate	Gross wage-earned per shift	Deductions	Dearness allowance or special allowance	Net earnings		

K. N. SUBRAMANIAN, Joint Secy.

MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND SUPPLY

NOTIFICATION

New Delhi, the 1st July 1948

No. 208.—In exercise of the powers conferred by clause 4 of the Colliery Control Order, 1945, as continued in force by Section 17 of the Essential Supplies (Temporary Powers) Act, 1946 (XXIV of 1946), the Central Government is pleased to direct that the following further amendments shall be made in the Notification of the Government of India in the late Department of Industries and Supplies No. 19, dated the 9th January 1946, namely:—

In the said notification, the table set forth under item "V. Collieries in Assam", shall be deleted and the following table substituted in its place, namely:—

Name of Colliery	Grade of coal or coke	Price per ton
		Rs. A. P.
The Assam Railways and Trading Co. Ltd.'s Margherita Collieries.	Run-of-mine . .	23 8 0
	Dust Coal . .	23 8 0
	Hand picked coal .	30 0 0
	Hard Coke . .	75 0 0
Nazira Coal Co. Ltd.'s Borgon Colliery. .	Run-of-mine . .	32 8 0
Dilli Colliery Company's Dilli Colliery. .	Do. . .	27 8 0
Cherra-Chattack Ropeway Co.'s Cherapunji Colliery	Do. . .	23 0 0
Messrs. A. K. Bhattacharjya & Md. Haniff Ltd.'s Dogring Colliery (Garo Hills) . .	Do. . .	23 8 0
Messrs. Assam Bengal Cement Coy's Borshora Colliery	Do. . .	27 8 0

P. R. NAYAK Dy. Sec.